Cooking the morning meal is a long-drawn-out process, requiring from two to three hours, for not only does water take a long time to boil in those earthen pots over a slow fire, but everything is done in a leisurely manner. While the meal is being cooked, the children and the women themselves roast mealies or monkey nuts, or sit about the courtyard eating sugar cane, for it is summer, the time when there is plenty. The old woman is now roasting some shelled monkey nuts on a potsherd; these she will stamp fine and add to the relish to give it additional flavouring.

A comely girl of about fourteen enters with a large gourd of water on her head, which a friend helps her to put down. '*Mukhadi wee*,' calls out her mother. '*Mulenwa*,' says the girl, a polite reply or formal answering phrase by which you know at once that she belongs to the royal group, for each group has its own distinguishing answering praise-title. 'Get ready the plates. I shall be dishing up soon.' Mukhadi goes into the huts and collects five dishes—three gourds and two wooden plates—in which are the remains of the previous meal. The remains are carefully set aside to be used for making light beer (*mabudu*), for food is never wasted; then the dishes are scoured by means of powdered sandstone and stood in a row in the sun to dry.

In a neighbouring courtyard a grandmother begins feeding a two-months-old baby with thick gruel of sprouted corn. She begins by washing its face, then, cupping her left hand filled with gruel before its mouth, she pushes in the food with a finger of the right hand. Splutterings and gurglings are of no avail till Granny has decided it has had enough. This novel procedure is followed from the day of birth as a supplement to mother's milk. After its meal comes its daily bath. The baby is held over a large potsherd of warm water and washed with a little soap, special care being taken to clean the head and eyes. The baby wriggles and cries; the sherd has jagged edges; the European onlooker fears that at any moment the child may slip out of the woman's hands; but she is skilled and experienced in the handling of infants, and nothing untoward occurs. After being air-dried, the baby's body is anointed with vaseline, an easy substitute for the butter fat of old. In the meantime two boys arrive, one with a large cock under his arm. They are sorry to have taken so long, but, when they looked for a fowl, only the fowls of their neighbours could be seen; their own were nowhere to be found. Your hostess is about to have it killed, but you decide you would prefer to taste native relish, so you give instructions that it is to be left on the hut veranda with legs tied together.

The woman of the *musha* has lifted her pot off the fire and is beginning to dish up. Smoothing down the porridge with her wooden spoon, she skilfully scoops out a spoonful, which she carefully lays on one of the platters. The result is a neat cake of porridge over which a smooth, outer skin very rapidly forms. A cake is placed in each of the dishes before a second is added, till there are four or five on each. A Lovedu housewife is very particular about the manner in which she dishes up food, for untidy-looking cakes with jagged edges give one the reputation of slovenliness. The Lovedu pride themselves on their cleanliness with food; porridge must be white, with no suspicion of a foreign object. When a

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14

practice often of less importance than the wife married first, and there is sometimes quite a conflict between the principles of age and legality. 595

Various factors, such as the household arrangements of the polygynous system, tend to make the tie between a mother and her own children, and more especially between mother and son, very strong and lasting. It is often possible to distinguish between the brothers in a polygynous household by the degree of resemblance in general nature and character to their mother. Children share any stigma that may be attached to their mother, and according as a man likes a wife so he likes her children. There is thus a high degree of solidarity between uterine brothers and sisters, who always like each other more than siblings by other wives. The attachment between Lovedu mother and child rests upon the firm foundations of a suckling period of several years, during which the child spends much of its time snugly strapped to her back. It is in many ways also an easier relationship than that among Europeans, with fewer prohibitions, fewer punishments and fewer of the petty grounds of conflict associated with such refinements as keeping hands or clothes clean. 595 593 [853 854]

The Lovedu girl is much with her mother, but she leaves home to get married soon after puberty and it is the boy in whose later life the mother plays the greatest role. During his boyhood the mother is the champion of her son. If he has been bullied by another, it is she who will take up the cudgels for him, and many of the worst quarrels between women arise in defence of their children. A boy of fifteen was pulling about and beating a boy of ten because he had not gone out to herd. Two men, in passing, called on him to desist, but to no avail till one of them said to a child standing near, 'Run and tell his mother Dwagu is killing her child.' The mother arrived and harangued Dwagu, who left off, but stoutly defended himself against her scolding tongue, and there the matter ended. When a young man marries, his mother is the dominating figure in his household. She controls his relations with his wife, telling him how to conduct himself while she is pregnant or during the suckling period, giving permission (indirectly through other old women) for their first sexual intercourse. When Masilu, a young man from town, came home ill, it was his mother who took him to a doctor. Ramano, after eight years absence in town, came home because his mother called him back; and Madume, a married man with two children, succeeded in avoiding a dangerous ritual office largely because his mother did not want him to undertake it. Even though he may be head of the village with authority over all its inmates, a man will still be constantly appealing to his mother's greater age and experience for guidance in matters that fall outside his own experience, more especially if his father is dead. Yet the mother, who so greatly controls her son, will never dare to have dealings with a stranger in the absence of the men nor presume to show him over the village. The son is the natural guardian of his mother. Should it be decided that she should move away from her husband's village, even if the cause be witchcraft, her sons will accompany her. Upon the youngest son, more particularly, falls the duty of caring for his parents in their old age. [833]

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14

CHAPTER VII

EARLY TRAINING

Nursing and growing up—herdboy gang life and the learning of veld-lore—an institutionalized play-school—'crossing' rites and the significance of ordeals and obscene language—opportunities and satisfactions of old age—the task of the modern school.

000 WE have not yet dealt with all the values and arrangements of Lovedu society to which the individual must be adjusted if he is to become a co-operating member. But it will not be premature to give a short review of the moulding process, as we shall thereby be led to consider some striking institutions of the tribe. The moulding of the individual is a lifelong process; yet some of the main characteristics appear early.

853 To the Lovedu the aggressiveness of young European children of two
854 or three years old and their inability to play amicably later on with other
865 children, characteristics natural in a competitive, non-co-operative, individualistic society like ours, are a source of surprise and often also amusement. 'European children are not like ours,' they say. 'They like very much to fight.' The Lovedu child is from early infancy treated with great lenience and kindness. 'Care for it,' they say even of an uterine child, 'for to-morrow it will care for you' (*khi lɛlɛ, ga matso khi lɛla wɛna*). There are no struggles for food, no strict rules of feeding. Whenever an infant cries, it is put to the breast. If its mother is away, its grandmother or even the young girl nursing it may put it to their breast to comfort it; but it is strictly forbidden for a suckling mother to allow any but her own child to drink of her milk. A woman who allowed a baby to cry without attending to it and trying to hush it would be severely reprimanded by the older women of the village. A baby is never left alone. Indeed, it is almost an appendix of its mother, at night sleeping against her naked breast, by day being carried on her back in its skin cradle. A woman, it is said, may forget all manner of things, but never the skin cradle of her child. When a mother wants to go out, there is never any problem as to what to do with baby. He is simply strapped to her back to accompany her, and should she choose to dance at a ceremony, even the most violent jumping movements would leave him unperturbed. So accustomed does a Lovedu baby become to his position on his mother's back that, when picked up, he quite naturally stretches out his feet at right angles to his body. While his mother stamps or hoes, the baby will be nursed by his grandmother or a nurse girl a little older than himself. This mode of life and treatment gives the child a sense of security, safety, and warmth. His wants are immediately attended to and the absence of cloth spares him even such small discomforts as wet napkins.

866 Before the long suckling period is over, the child is already walking and forms part of a group of toddlers, who give him his first lessons in independence. If he falls and hurts himself while playing with them, there is no one to fuss over him; if another child hits him, he will hit back or